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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a survey of the marriage and fertility histories of women in the United States conducted in June 1990 by the Bureau of the Census as a supplement to the Current Population Survey. The marriage and fertility history surveys were taken in 1971, 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1990. This paper focuses on recent trends in marriage, divorce, remarriage, and redivorce. Previous results are updated with new data. The nature of the relationship between certain social and demographic variables (educational attainment, fertility history, age, race and Hispanic origin, age at marital event, duration in marital status) and marriage behavior is described. The effects of marriage and fertility behavior on children and families are discussed, and some possibilities for the near-term future about where these trends may lead are offered. Fourteen tables are included. These conclusions are presented: (1) the marriage and divorce norms and behaviors that are acceptable to American society have evolved over the past 25 years; (2) proportionally more women will never marry than has been the case in the past; (3) divorce has peaked and will subside somewhat; (4) although remarriage rates have fallen the growth of consequent stepfamilies is significant; and (5) a large segment of the U.S. adult population flows into and out of several marital categories during their life course. (ABL)

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MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE IN THE 1990s

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INTRODUCTION

The remarkable changes that have taken place during the last quarter century in patterns of marriage behavior in the United States have profoundly influenced most social and economic aspects of our lives. Delayed first marriage is associated with increased education and work experience among women which in turn is associated with delayed and lower fertility (Norton and Miller, 1990). High rates of separation and divorce, as well as larger numbers of never-married women having children, have resulted in significant numbers and proportions of adults and children experiencing life in one-parent families, often a socially and economically deprived status requiring assistance from several societal sectors. It has been estimated that almost half of children today will spend time in a single-parent family (Zill, 1988; and Bumpass, 1990).

One of the ways by which these trends have been identified and monitored has been through the results of surveys designed to gather information about people's marriage and fertility experiences over the course of their lives. This paper presents results of a survey of the marriage and fertility histories of women in the United States conducted in June of 1990 by the Bureau of the Census under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. This was the fifth in a series of such surveys conducted as supplements to the

Current Population Survey (CPS). The marriage and fertility history surveys were taken in 1971, 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1990. They have proven to be an invaluable source of detailed national data that students of marriage and family have used to, among other things, link marriage and fertility behavior; determine life course changes; study patterns of marriage, divorce, remarriage and redivorce; and determine the prevalence of step relationships.

This paper focuses on recent trends in marriage, divorce, remarriage, and redivorce. We update previous results with new data on the frequency with which several cohorts of women enter and exit various marital statuses. We describe the nature of the relationship between certain social and demographic variables (educational attainment, fertility history, age, race and Hispanic origin, age at marital event, duration in marital status) and marriage behavior. The paper discusses the effects of marriage and fertility behavior on children and families, and offers some possibilities for the near-term future about where these trends may lead and their probable impact on families in the 1990s.

RECENT TRENDS IN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The litany of marriage and divorce statistics covering the last 25 years is familiar to most. Figure 1 and Table A show the general pattern of historical change in first marriage, divorce,

and remarriage rates. Beginning in the latter half of the 1960s, each of the three rates started on a course that would profoundly influence the character of household and family living in the United States for decades to come. Most notably the divorce rate began to rise and the first marriage rate began to fall. The remarriage rate initially began to rise in response to the rising divorce rate, but ultimately began a decline similar to that of the first marriage rate. Between the late 1960s and 1980 the divorce rate doubled, reaching a level where at least one of every two marriages was expected to end in divorce (Castro Martin and Bumpass, 1989). The divorce rate remained relatively unchanged during the 1980s exhibiting a small drop toward the end of the decade. The first marriage and remarriage rates declined rather constantly throughout both the 1970s and 1980s. The divorce trend reflected in these rates implies a continued high proportion of marriages ending in divorce even though there has been no increase in the last decade.

The marriage rates, on the other hand, imply a less clear trend. That is, it is not clear whether the declines in these rates have been caused by a change in the timing of marriage or by a trend toward more people never marrying at all. These general rates are based upon information from the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics and while they provide an accurate overview of marriage behavior, they do not provide details on the dynamics and the socioeconomic variables associated with marrying,

divorcing, and remarrying.

Another part of the marital experience story is told through the responses to the retrospective questions asked in the June 1990 Marriage and Fertility History Survey and its predecessor surveys. They are the basis for developing analyses on the flow into and out of marital statuses as people move along the life course.

Table B shows the distributions of women by age, race, and Hispanic origin (women of Hispanic origin may be of any race) according to whether they have ever been married, divorced after first marriage, remarried after divorce, or redivorced using data from the four most recent marriage history surveys. Women 20 to 54 years old are featured because these age groups include women whose marriage experiences to date reflect the range of change in trends during the last 25 years. The older women have participated in the major divorce and remarriage shifts of the 1970s and 1980s, and the younger women are and will participate in the current trends and the trends of the next decade. It is unlikely that a major influence on marriage and divorce trends will be exerted by women over age 54.

FIRST MARRIAGE

The distribution of the percentage of women who had ever married by each survey date clearly shows an aggregate movement away from

early age at first marriage. The most notable declines in percent ever married are for women in their 20s and 30s at the respective survey dates. Between 1975 and 1990 the percent of women ever married dropped from 63 percent to 38 percent for women 20 to 24, from 87 percent to 69 percent for women 25 to 29, from 93 percent to 82 percent for women 30 to 34, and from 96 percent to 89 percent for women 35 to 39 years old. Among women 40 and over, the percent change has been slight with more than 90 percent recorded as being ever married. These figures support other studies (Norton and Moorman, 1987; U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1991; and London, 1991) showing increases in age at first marriage.

Whether or not the trend implies a significantly higher proportion of people among the total population never marrying at all remains to be seen. It appears likely that at the very least the overall proportion ever-marrying among all women will, for the foreseeable future, be closer to 90 percent than to 95 percent which has historically been the percentage reached by most cohorts of women.

The most striking aspect of shifts in the percentage of women ever marrying is the growing difference between White women and Black women. In the past Black women have married later than White women but have eventually had similar proportions ever married by the time both groups reached their 40s and 50s. In

1975, about 94 percent of White women and 87 percent of Black women in their early 30s had ever married. In 1990, the percent for White women 30 to 34 had fallen to 86 percent while the percent for Black women 30 to 34 had plummeted to 61 percent. Further, only 75 percent of Black women in their late 30s had ever married by June 1990 as compared with 91 percent of White women in their late 30s.

The comparisons suggest an altered relationship between Blacks and Whites regarding marriage. Assuming that the small amount of first marrying that has taken place after age 40 among both Black and White women will remain the pattern for the near-term future, less than three-fourths of Black women will eventually marry as compared with at least 9 of every 10 White women. Thus, not only will Black women who marry, marry later than White women but also a far greater proportion of Black women than White women will never marry.[1/]

One of the important consequences of these developments is that a larger proportion of women will remain unmarried during their principal childbearing years and thus be subject to the risk of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy and of being a parent in a lone-parent family--most especially so among Black women. Recent data show a sharp drop in the proportion of women who marry to avert an out-of-wedlock first birth, from 52 percent marrying in 1960-1964 to 27 percent marrying in 1985-1989 (Bachu, 1991). A

disproportionate share in the growth of one-parent situations in recent years has been accounted for by never-married women maintaining families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). That trend is likely to continue and, if so, will result in additional strains on social and economic programs upon which many of these families must rely for sustenance. The survey data do not answer the question of why Black women are increasingly less likely to marry than White women.

Marriage history survey data for women of Hispanic origin, who may be of any race, have been available only since 1980. The pattern of change in and the levels of the percents ever married by age for these women are quite similar to those of White women.

DIVORCE AFTER FIRST MARRIAGE

The data in Table B for percent of ever-married women who ended their first marriage by divorce show somewhat different patterns for younger and older women. For age groups under 35 there were increases across the board between 1975 and 1980 in the percent who had divorced but only one significant increase occurred between 1980 and 1985 or 1985 and 1990.[2/] In fact, for the latter period there is some indication of a drop in the percent who divorced.[3/] For women in age groups 35 and above the pattern is one of continual increase across each 5-year interval spanning 1975 to 1990.

The apparent trend showing differences between the younger and older women may be construed to mean a shift in propensity to divorce (less for the younger, more for the older) or a shift to later years in the timing of divorce. The latter would logically imply a longer duration of first marriage before divorce, but the data do not show this. For example, among women ages 25 to 29 who ended a first marriage in divorce the median length of marriage before divorce in 1990 was 3.4 years compared with 3.7 years in 1985, and 4.0 years in 1980.[4/] For women 30 to 34, the durations of first marriage before divorce were 4.9 years in 1990, 5.2 years in 1985, and 5.5 years in 1980.[5/] It could be that because more women are marrying later, higher proportions of those later marriages will eventually end in divorce but at older ages. This too seems unlikely given the inverse relationship between age at marriage and likelihood of divorce.

A later section of this paper discusses correlates of divorce including age at marriage. The 1990 figures do reflect a trend toward fewer overall divorces among younger cohorts when they eventually finish their divorce experience than among the older cohorts.

The data also show increases in the percent divorced after first marriage for 5-year cohorts 35 to 54 years old. The data indicate smaller incremental gains in general for 35 to 49 year olds in the percent divorced after first marriage during

the period 1985 to 1990 than during the earlier 5-year periods shown in Table B. This may mean that the percents eventually divorcing among the various cohorts will be somewhat less than the one of every two marriages suggested by earlier surveys (Norton and Moorman, 1987).

The data in Table C illustrate this proposition. This table shows what the eventual proportion divorced after first marriage would be for women 20 to 54 in 1990 assuming future increments to the proportion divorced for these women would be the same amount as those for successively older 5-year cohorts as they passed through: a) the high divorce period of 1975 to 1980, or b) the relatively lower divorce period of 1985 to 1990.

The results of this exercise show that if one assumes a continuation of recent divorce trends, about 4 of 10 first marriages to the youngest cohort may eventually end in divorce. Alternatively, if one assumes a return to the pattern of divorce during the 1975 to 1980 period, 5 of 10 first marriages may eventually end in divorce.

Although either assumption may turn out to be correct for the future, the trends implied by the 1985 to 1990 changes conform to expectations expressed in earlier research (Norton and Moorman, 1987) and, in our estimation, are likely to continue for the near

term. This is especially true for the older cohorts. The data in Table B and the "projections" based on 1985 to 1990 trends in Table C both indicate a relatively higher percent eventually divorced for women in their 30s and early 40s in 1990 than for older or younger women. This implies that women born during the early and middle baby-boom years are likely to have higher eventual percents divorced than their predecessors or successors. Divorce prospects for the younger women may be even lower than the lowest rates shown in the illustrative projections in Table C since they are more likely to marry later than the older women and the projections do not explicitly take into account age at marriage.

The general patterns of divorce after first marriage shown for all women 20 to 54 years old also exist for White and Black women and for women of Hispanic origin. Overall, Black women have higher percents divorced than White or Hispanic women. Women of Hispanic origin are the least likely to have been divorced.

Even with an anticipated decline in divorce, the percent of marriages in the United States that end in divorce will likely continue to be among the highest recorded in the world (United Nations, 1988). Large proportions of the population will continue to be affected by divorce and its consequences.

REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE

High divorce rates create, among other things, a large pool of eligibles for remarriage. Remarriage in the United States has become a relatively common life course event. Currently more than 4 of every 10 marriages in the U.S. involves a second or higher order marriage for the bride, the groom, or both (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1991).[6/] The data in Table B on the percent of women who remarried after divorce show a decline in remarriage proportions between 1975 and 1990.[7/] The data on remarriage after divorce indicate a probable overall decline in the proportion of women who eventually remarry. The figures for the oldest cohort displayed, women 50 to 54, show that the percent remarried after divorce was 74 in 1975 and 63 in 1990.

These data reflect the timing of both divorce and remarriage. For years prior to 1990 the percent remarried generally increased for each older cohort. The results for 1990 seem to indicate that relatively fewer women remarried at ages 50 to 54 than in their 40s or late 30s (although the apparent difference is not statistically significant). This could mean in 1990 that the women age 50 to 54 are simply aberrant with respect to their remarriage behavior, or that they had relatively more members of their cohort who divorced later and were not exposed to the possibility of remarriage for a very long time, or that the percent remarried for women 50 to 54 reflects a trend toward less

remarriage overall for divorced women. If either or both of the latter two possibilities are true, near-term future levels of remarriage after divorce may be closer to two-thirds than the three-fourths usually cited in the context of marriage analyses (Bumpass, Sweet, and Castro Martin, 1990).

Even if such a diminution in percent remarrying occurs, remarriage will still be relatively widespread resulting in, among other things, a continued increase in the number of reconstituted, blended, and/or stepfamilies.

The percents remarried after divorce were higher for White women than for Black women or women of Hispanic origin.[8/] The lower propensity for Black and Hispanic women to remarry increases the likelihood of one-parent family situations among these groups--an especially important trend among Blacks for whom declines in first marriage are also contributing to the growth in one-parent families. Higher remarriage rates among Whites increase their likelihood of having to face the challenges brought on by the complexities associated with living in blended and/or stepfamily situations.

REDIVORCE

Past increases in the number of remarriages after divorce have led to increases in the number of couples subject to ending a marriage through the redivorce of at least one of the partners.

Although the number of redivorces is still relatively small and the data are not yet sufficient for meaningful comparisons by race or ethnicity, the data do support an overall analytic exposition covering the past decade.

About 3.1 million women 15 to 65 years old in 1990 had ended their first two marriages in divorce. These women represented 5 percent of all ever-married women and 29 percent of all women who remarried after their first divorce. By contrast, 17.2 million women 15 to 65 years old in 1990 had ended a first marriage by divorce, representing about 28 percent of all ever-married women. Previous studies have indicated that redivorce is somewhat more likely than first divorce and that redivorce occurs sooner after remarriage than first divorce occurs after first marriage (Castro Martin and Bumpass, 1989).

Table D shows the percentage of remarried women in 1990 who ended a second marriage in redivorce and, using the same projection method as for Table C, the percentage who may eventually end a remarriage in redivorce. The latter estimates are only illustrative and are subject to constraints of both methodology and data that have high sampling variability because of the relatively infrequent occurrence of redivorce in the general population. Overall, the results imply that the eventual proportion redivorced will range from about one-quarter again as large as the eventual proportion of women who may be expected to

end a first marriage by divorce for the youngest cohorts shown to virtually no difference between the likelihood of divorce after first marriage and after remarriage for women in the older cohorts (particularly following the pattern of change between 1985 and 1990). The results suggest that no clear-cut assertion can be made that redivorce is more probable than divorce after first marriage.

CORRELATES AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

There are several variables that seem to be causally linked with the likelihood of divorce or remarriage. Earlier studies have documented the association between age at marriage and divorce, educational attainment and divorce, premarital pregnancy and divorce, and age at divorce and likelihood of remarriage (Norton and Moorman, 1987). This section of the paper focuses on these correlates of divorce and remarriage featuring the results of the June 1990 survey.

The June 1990 results shown in Table E reaffirm the inverse relationship between age at first marriage and likelihood of divorce. The data show that for each 5-year age group presented, women who married before age 20 were significantly more likely to have ended a first marriage in divorce than women who first married at later ages. Further, women who married at age 30 or older had much lower proportions divorced than women who married

at younger ages.[9] For example, among women 50 to 54 years old in 1990 about one-third of those who first married in their teens had ended that marriage in divorce while only 15 percent of the women who first married at ages 30 or older had done so. Similar patterns may be seen for each of the other age groups shown.

The association between educational attainment and likelihood of divorce is demonstrated by the results shown in Table F. Overall the data show no unidimensional association between education and divorce. The data do appear to support the so-called "Glick effect" which suggests that people with an incomplete education--those that apparently stopped short of a diploma or degree--are more likely to divorce than people who attain exact diploma or degree levels.[10]

For four of the five age groups shown, women who had completed exactly either 12 years of school or 16 years of school had lower percents divorced than women who had more years of school completed but who had not attained the next "degree" level. More specifically, women who completed 12 years of school had lower percents divorced than women who completed 13 to 15 years of school and women who completed 16 years or school had lower percents divorced than women who completed 17 or more years of school. Overall, women who completed exactly 16 years of school had the lowest proportions divorced after first marriage.

Another variable that appears to influence the likelihood of divorce among women who have ever borne children is the circumstance of the first birth. Women who have ever married and who had a premarital first birth or a premaritally conceived but postmaritally delivered first birth appear to have greater proportions divorced than women whose first birth was conceived after first marriage. About three-quarters of the 52 million ever-married mothers covered by the June 1990 survey had conceived and borne their children after first marriage. Of the remaining women, about equal proportions had either a premarital conception/postmarital birth (12.6 percent) or a premarital birth (12.6 percent). The data in Table G indicate that for all age groups shown the likelihood of divorce after first marriage is similar for mothers who conceived or bore their first child before marriage but that each of these groups has a higher proportion divorced after first marriage than do mothers whose first child was postmaritally conceived.

The frequency with which women bear children before marriage has been increasing. For example, 29 percent of first births to women 15 to 34 years old during the period 1985-1989 were to unmarried women as compared with 13 percent of first births during 1960-1964 (Bachu, 1991). There is a difference between race and ethnic groups in the proportion of first births that took place before the mother's marriage. About 70 percent of first births to Black women 15 to 34 years old during 1985-1989

were premarital births. Comparable estimates for Whites and Hispanics (who may be of any race) were 22 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

The data in Table H show that for ever-married mothers 40 to 49 years old--a group that has completed most of its childbearing and first marriage experience--having conceived and/or borne a first child before marriage increases the chances of divorce among White women but not among Black women or women of Hispanic origin. Apparently the steeply declining rates of marriage among Black women are not a function of fear of greater risk of divorce because of premarital childbearing. The relatively high overall incidence of divorce after first marriage for Black women may be only one of several factors that influence some Black women not to marry (to avoid the risk of eventual divorce).

Remarriage after the first marriage ended in divorce occurs most frequently for women who divorced at relatively young ages and who have been divorced for relatively short periods of time. Table I shows clearly that among women who divorced in their 20s or 30s (the ages during which 8 of 10 divorces after first marriage occur), those who divorced at the youngest ages were more likely to have remarried. About three out of four women who divorced in their early twenties were remarried by the survey date as compared with fewer than one half of the women who divorced in their late 30s. This relationship holds for White

women, Black women, and for women of Hispanic origin.[11/] These data do not consider the length of time a woman has spent in a divorced status at risk of remarriage.

The June 1990 data show the median duration of first marriage before divorce to be about 6.3 years for women 20 to 54. Among women in their late 20s and early 30s, ages when divorce is most likely to occur, the duration of first marriage before divorce has been declining. Women 25 to 29 in 1990 had spent a median of 3.4 years in a first marriage before divorce as compared with a median duration of 4.0 years for women 25 to 29 in 1980. Similarly, among women 30 to 34 years old the median duration in first marriage before divorce fell from 5.5 years in 1980 to 4.9 years in 1990. The 1990 survey results indicate that for women who divorced after first marriage, divorce occurred within 3 years for 22 percent, within 5 years for 38 percent, within 10 years for 65 percent, and within 20 years for 90 percent. If relatively greater proportions of women in 1990 are yet to divorce compared with women of the same ages in 1980, the median durations between marriage and divorce for women in 1990 will move closer to those for women in 1980. However, this may not be likely since the median duration of first marriage before divorce for women 40 to 44 years old, women who had by and large completed their first marriage and divorce experience, fell from 9.7 years in 1980 to 7.6 years in 1990.

Insofar as the trend toward shorter duration of marriage before divorce reduces the age at which women divorce and insofar as younger age at divorce implies greater likelihood of remarriage, then one might expect the percent remarrying to eventually increase. However, as of June 1990 there has been no indication of an upturn in the remarriage rate among women.

The time spent in a divorced status is undoubtedly associated with likelihood of eventual remarriage. In the 1990 survey, the median duration of divorce before remarriage for all women who ended a first marriage in divorce and who subsequently remarried was 2.5 years. About one-fourth of those who remarried had done so within 1 year of divorce and three-fourths of the remarriers had done so within 5 years of divorce. Thus, most remarriages take place relatively soon after divorce and the frequency of remarriage decreases as the duration in a divorced status increases. For example, the data in Table J show that in 1990 among women 40 to 49 years old who ended a first marriage in divorce 70 percent of those divorced for 3 or more years had remarried, 73 percent of those divorced for 5 or more years had remarried, 80 percent of those divorced for 10 years or more had remarried, and 86 percent of those divorced for 15 years or more had remarried. Only 13 percentage points were added to the percent remarried when the duration since first divorce was extended from 5 years to 15 years. A similar pattern is shown for women 50 to 59 in 1990.

TRENDS IN FAMILY GROUPS WITH CHILDREN

Trends in marriage behavior are generally responsible for trends in family formation and/or dissolution. This section describes recent developments regarding family living arrangements for those families with children present.

The total number of family groups with children under 18 rose from 32.2 million in March 1980, to 34.7 million (a 7.8 percent increase) in March 1990 (see Table K).[12/] During the same period, the number of two-parent family groups remained essentially unchanged (24.9 million in 1990) and the number of one-parent family groups increased by 40.9 percent (to 9.7 million). The 1970-1980 decade shows the same basic trends.

Premarital childbearing, separation, and divorce have caused one-parent family groups to become much more prevalent (and accepted) in the United States in the last 20 years. Now, about 3 in 10 family groups are maintained by just one parent, while in 1970 only 1 in 10 were. The trend toward more one-parent family groups holds regardless of race or Hispanic origin. However, the magnitude varies. In 1990, single-parent family groups accounted for 22.6 percent of all White, 60.6 percent of all Black, and 33.2 percent of all Hispanic family groups. For Black children, the one-parent family group is now the most common living arrangement. For White and Hispanic children, the one-parent

family group is now a common living arrangement, but not the most common one.

There were 1,351,000 single-parent family groups maintained by fathers in 1990. This was more than a three-fold increase since 1970 when there were only 393,000 single-parent family groups maintained by men. However, women still maintained 86.1 percent of the single-parent family groups in 1990. So, the problems of single parents today are still for the great majority, the problems of single mothers.

Relatively pervasive remarriage, as well as premarital childbearing, have ensured that two-parent families are not a homogeneous group. The June CPS marital and fertility history supplement allows us to look at married-couple family households by type of family.[13/] In 1990, 5.3 million married-couple family households contained at least one stepchild under age 18 (see Table L).[14/] This was 20.8 percent of all married-couple family households with children. In 1980, 3.9 million such households existed, constituting 16.1 percent of all married-couple households with children. One can see that both the number of these families that exist and their proportion of all married-couple families with children is increasing--although certainly not as rapidly as the growth in single-parent families.

There were slightly more families containing only stepchildren in 1990 (2.8 million) than there were families with a "blend" of step and other children (2.5 million). Still, the split was fairly even. Both of these family types can be expected to have separate and distinct challenges to face.

It is useful to view the data from a slightly different angle and see how many children are being raised in each of the various possible living arrangements. In March of 1990, 72.5 percent of children under 18 were living with two parents (including step and adoptive parents), 24.7 percent with one parent, and 2.7 percent with neither parent (see Table M). The comparable proportions for March 1970 were: 85.2 percent living with two parents, 11.9 percent living with one parent, and 2.9 percent living with neither parent.[15/]

It is clear that children today are living in a much wider variety of living arrangements than they were just 20 years ago. This wider variety of living arrangements that children experience can be explained by a combination of the greater incidence of divorce and the greater incidence of never-married women giving birth today than 20 years ago (Saluter, 1991 and U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1991).

The proportions of children living with two, one, and no parents varied widely in the past by race and Hispanic origin and they

continue to vary today. In 1990, more Black children were living with one parent (54.8 percent) - primarily their mother - than with two parents. Among White children, 19.2 percent lived with one parent and among Hispanic children 30.0 percent lived with one parent. The proportions living with one parent in 1980 were lower but the pattern by race and Hispanic origin were the same.

Even if one restricts the universe to children in married-couple family households, diversity abounds. An estimated 81.5 percent of such children (or 37.0 million) were living with a biological mother and father in June of 1990 (see Table N). This means that almost one child in five was **not** living in what Americans tend to think of as the "traditional" family - birth mother, birth father, and child(ren). Most of these children (6.6 million) were living with their biological mother and a stepfather. It is still quite unusual for a father to retain custody of minor children after a divorce. Only 608,000 children were living with a stepmother and a biological father in 1990.

CONCLUSION

America has seen the marriage and divorce norms and behaviors that are acceptable to our society evolve over the past 25 years - with a particular emphasis on the broadening of acceptable behaviors. Women feel freer to have and raise children without getting married. Couples are marrying later, and they are divorcing and remarrying in numbers that would have

been well beyond comprehension 25 years ago.

The data show that proportionally more women will never marry than has been the case in the past, that divorce has peaked and will subside somewhat but will still remain high enough to continue to merit major attention as a social and economic issue, that although remarriage rates have fallen, the growth of consequent stepfamilies is significant, and that a large segment of the U.S. adult population flows into and out of several marital categories during their life course.

These societal changes have led to American children today living in increasingly varied and complex living arrangements. More children are living with only one parent. The vast majority of these children are living with their mother, but it is no longer unheard of for children (including girls) to be living with a single father. Even children living with two parents today are more likely to be living in a family which is not composed of two biological parents and only full biological siblings - the "traditional" family of 25 years ago. They are more likely to have stepparents and half brothers/sisters than ever before. These various relationships have led the family to become a much more complex institution than it once was.

Finally, we suggest that during the 1990s: later age at marriage or not marrying at all will continue as in the recent past,

resulting in, among other things, more families maintained by never-married mothers, continued higher rates of post-secondary enrollment for young women and continued high rates of female labor force participation; divorce may drop to a point where 4 of 10 marriages may be expected to dissolve rather than the 5 of 10 generally observed during the 1980s; remarriage will be less frequent than in the past with about 2 of 3 women in the 1990s expected to remarry after divorce; and, overall, the institutions that serve the needs of people who have been affected by these trends will be better equipped to respond having learned during the 1980s what the social and economic consequences of these trends have been.

FOOTNOTES

1/ Farley and Bianchi (1987), London (1991), and others found a similar divergence in the propensity of Black and White women to marry.

2/ The proportion of women aged 30 to 34 who were divorced from their first husbands rose from 26.2 percent in 1980 to 29.3 percent in 1985.

3/ The proportion of women aged 25 to 29 who were divorced from their first husbands declined significantly between 1985 and 1990. The comparable proportions for both 20 to 24 year olds and 30 to 34 year olds exhibited apparent declines, but neither were statistically significant.

4/ Unpublished Current Population Survey tabulations for June 1990, 1985, and 1980.

5/ The difference between 1990 (4.9 years) and 1985 (5.2 years) is significant at the 89-percent level of confidence. The difference between 1985 (5.2 years) and 1980 (5.5 years) is significant at the 88-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

6/ This figure includes a small proportion of remarriages after widowhood.

7/ The apparent decline between 1975 and 1990 in the proportion of 40 to 44 year olds who had remarried (from 70 percent to 67 percent) is not statistically significant.

8/ The apparent difference between the proportions of Black and Hispanic origin women remarrying after a divorce from their first spouse is not statistically significant.

9/ The differences for 55 to 59 year olds between the likelihood of having been divorced from one's first husband if one was first married at 30 years of age or older versus at either 20 to 24 years of age or 25 to 29 years of age are not statistically significant.

10/ Data from the 1990 survey identify only years of school completed and not whether a diploma or degree was attained. We infer from these results that 12 years completed is equivalent to achieving a high school diploma and 16 years completed is equivalent to achieving a bachelor's degree from college. Data from the 1990 census question on educational attainment as well as from Current Population Survey questions on education attainment

beginning in 1993 will reflect a diploma/degree-based set of response categories. The results will directly identify persons who received high school diplomas, Associate degrees, Bachelor's degrees, or advanced post-secondary degrees. Under the current scheme the proportion of persons who completed 13 to 15 years of school and who received an Associate's degree and the proportion of persons who completed more than 16 years of school and received degrees beyond the Bachelor's level are unknown.

[11/]Only about one of every four Black and Hispanic women divorced from their first husbands in their late 30s had remarried by the survey date.

[12/]These data come from the March CPS. Family groups include family households, related subfamilies, and unrelated subfamilies.

[13/]This section of the analysis excludes subfamilies. The methodology used to derive parent and family type is described in Miller and Moorman (1989). The first date for which these family and child type data were derived was June 1980.

[14/]For the purposes of this analysis, children were still considered to be stepchildren even if they had been adopted by the nonbiological parent with whom they were living at the time of the survey.

[15/]The proportions of children living with neither parent in March 1990 and March 1970 (2.7 percent versus 2.9 percent) were not statistically different.

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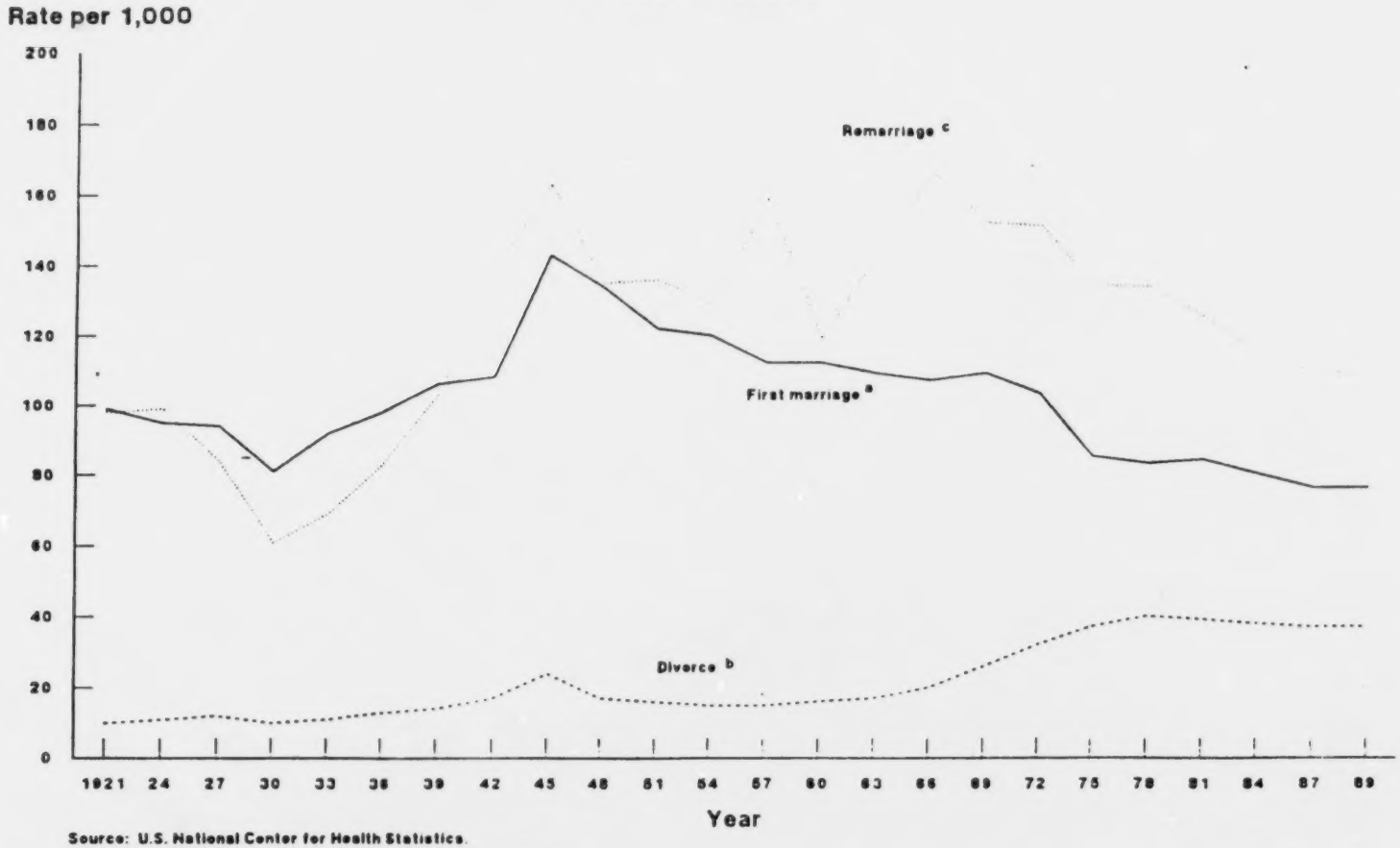
Rates of First Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage for U.S. Women: 1921-1989 (3-Year Averages)



Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.
a First marriages per 1,000 single women 14 to 44 years old.
b Divorces per 1,000 married women 14 to 44 years old.
c Remarriages per 1,000 widowed and divorced women 14 to 54 years old.

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Table A. Number and Rate of First Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States, Three-Year Averages, 1921-1989

Period	First marriage		Divorce		Remarriage	
	Thousands	Rate(1)	Thousands	Rate(2)	Thousands	Rate(3)
1921-23	990	99	158	10	186	98
1924-26	992	95	177	11	200	99
1927-29	1025	94	201	12	181	84
1930-32	919	81	183	10	138	61
1933-35	1081	92	196	11	162	69
1936-38	1183	98	243	13	201	83
1939-41	1312	106	269	14	254	103
1942-44	1247	108	360	17	354	139
1945-47	1540	143	526	24	425	163
1948-50	1326	134	397	17	360	135
1951-53	1190	122	388	16	370	136
1954-56	1182	120	379	15	353	129
1957-59	1128	112	381	15	359	129
1960-62	1205	112	407	16	345	119
1963-65	1311	109	452	17	415	143
1966-68	1440	107	535	20	511	166
1969-71	1649	109	702	26	515	152
1972-74	1662	103	907	32	601	151
1975-77	1508	85	1070	37	646	134
1978-80	1580	83	1167	40	754	134
1981-83	1632	84	1191	39	822	125
1982-84	1633	84	1168	38	830	123
1984-86	1595	80	1179	38	838	115
1987-89(4)	1564	76	1165	37	837	109

1/ First marriages per 1,000 single women 14 to 44 years old.
2/ Divorces per 1,000 married women 14 to 44 years old.
3/ Remarriages per 1,000 widowed and divorced women 14 to 54 years old.
4/ Data on 1st and remarriages are not available for 1989. The proportions for 1988 were applied to 1989 marriages (12 months ending in December).
Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

Table B. Marriage Experience for Women 20 to 54 Years Old, by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1990

Category	All races				White				Black				Hispanic* Origin		
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1975	1980	1985	1990	1975	1980	1985	1990	1980	1985	1990
Percentage ever married															
20-24	62.5	49.5	43.3	38.5	64.9	52.2	46.6	41.3	47.5	33.3	23.9	23.5	55.4	56.7	45.8
25-29	87.2	78.6	74.0	69.0	88.8	81.0	77.4	73.2	76.5	62.3	53.4	45.0	80.2	78.4	69.6
30-34	93.1	89.9	85.8	82.2	93.9	91.6	88.1	85.6	87.1	77.9	70.9	61.1	88.3	88.0	83.0
35-39	95.5	94.3	91.6	89.4	96.2	95.3	93.1	91.4	90.1	87.4	80.7	74.9	91.2	91.6	88.9
40-44	95.8	95.1	94.6	92.0	95.9	95.8	95.6	93.4	95.1	89.7	86.1	82.1	94.2	90.3	92.8
45-49	95.9	95.9	94.4	94.4	95.9	96.4	95.1	95.1	95.4	92.5	88.4	89.7	94.4	91.1	91.7
50-54	95.8	95.3	95.2	95.5	96.0	95.8	95.4	96.1	94.6	92.1	93.4	91.9	95.0	92.5	91.8
Percentage divorced after first marriage															
20-24	11.2	14.2	13.9	12.5	11.3	14.7	14.4	12.8	10.6	10.5	11.0	9.6	9.4	11.0	6.8
25-29	17.1	20.7	21.0	19.2	17.7	21.0	21.5	19.8	15.3	20.2	18.2	17.8	13.9	14.8	13.5
30-34	19.8	26.2	29.3	28.1	20.0	25.8	29.0	28.6	20.5	31.4	34.4	26.6	21.1	19.2	19.9
35-39	21.5	27.2	32.0	34.1	21.2	26.7	32.0	34.6	22.7	32.9	34.6	35.8	21.9	26.3	29.7
40-44	20.5	26.1	32.1	35.8	19.7	25.5	32.0	35.2	27.4	33.7	36.9	45.1	19.7	22.8	26.6
45-49	21.0	23.1	29.0	35.2	20.3	22.7	28.4	35.5	26.9	29.0	36.0	39.8	23.9	24.3	24.6
50-54	18.0	21.8	25.7	29.5	16.8	21.0	24.6	28.5	29.7	29.0	33.7	39.2	22.5	21.8	22.9
Percentage remarried after divorce															
20-24	47.9	45.5	44.3	38.1	50.1	47.0	46.0	39.3	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
25-29	60.2	53.4	55.3	51.8	62.0	56.4	58.3	52.8	43.1	27.9	25.4	44.4	(B)	50.5	49.5
30-34	64.4	60.9	61.4	59.6	67.5	63.3	64.3	61.4	41.8	42.0	41.1	42.0	58.3	44.9	45.9
35-39	69.5	64.9	63.0	65.0	70.9	66.9	64.9	66.5	62.6	50.6	44.8	54.0	45.2	57.1	51.2
40-44	69.7	67.4	64.7	67.1	71.9	68.6	67.5	69.5	57.1	58.4	45.4	50.3	(B)	50.6	53.9
45-49	69.6	69.2	67.9	65.9	70.7	70.4	69.6	67.2	61.7	62.7	54.6	55.0	(B)	78.9	51.0
50-54	73.5	72.0	68.2	63.0	73.4	72.6	68.4	65.4	73.7	72.7	64.3	50.2	(B)	(B)	62.2
Percentage redivorced after remarriage															
20-24	(NA)	8.5	8.7	13.1	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
25-29	(NA)	15.6	18.2	17.8	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
30-34	(NA)	19.1	20.0	22.7	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
35-39	(NA)	24.7	26.9	28.5	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
40-44	(NA)	28.4	33.0	30.6	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
45-49	(NA)	25.1	33.8	36.4	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
50-54	(NA)	29.0	27.3	34.5	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

B Base is less than 75,000.

NA Not available.

* Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table C. Percent of Women 20 to 54 years old Whose First Marriage had Ended in Divorce by 1990 and May Eventually End in Divorce: June 1990

AGE	PERCENT OF WOMEN WHOSE FIRST MARRIAGE-- HAD ENDED IN DIVORCE BY 1990	MAY EVENTUALLY END IN DIVORCE IF THEIR FUTURE EXPERIENCE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF OLDER COHORTS DURING*	
		1975 - 1980	1985 - 1990
20-24	12.5	49.2	37.6
25-29	19.2	46.4	39.0
30-34	28.1	46.2	40.8
35-39	34.1	44.8	42.0
40-44	35.8	41.9	39.9
45-49	35.2	38.7	36.2
50-54	29.5	32.0	30.2

* Increments through age 65.

Table D. Percent of Women 15 to 65 years old Whose Second Marriage had Ended in Redivorce by 1990 and May Eventually End in Redivorce: June 1990

AGE	PERCENT OF WOMEN WHOSE SECOND MARRIAGE-- HAD ENDED IN REDIVORCE BY 1990	MAY EVENTUALLY END IN REDIVORCE IF THEIR FUTURE EXPERIENCE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF OLDER COHORTS DURING 1980 - 1985	1985 - 1990
20-24	13.1	62.1	46.8
25-29	17.8	57.1	42.4
30-34	22.7	57.6	42.8
35-39	28.5	55.6	40.1
40-44	30.6	49.4	38.5
45-49	36.4	49.8	40.9
50-54	34.5	45.7	38.3
55-59	31.1	38.3	31.1
60-65	27.0		

Table E. Percent of Ever-Married Women who Divorced After First Marriage by Age at First Marriage and Age at Survey Date: June 1990

Age at First Marriage (Years)	AGE AT SURVEY DATE (YEARS) 35 TO 39	40 TO 44	45 TO 49	50 TO 54	55 TO 59
Under 20	47.4	46.6	44.5	34.4	32.9
20 - 24	29.3	32.1	31.7	26.3	19.5
25 - 29	24.0	25.6	22.6	27.9	18.3
30 or older	10.4	11.7	15.8	14.7	16.9

Table F. Percent of Ever-Married Women Who Divorced After First Marriage by Years of School Completed and Age at Survey Date: June 1990

	AGE AT SURVEY DATE (YEARS)				
Years of School Completed	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59
Less than 12.....	36.1	32.7	36.3	31.0	25.8
12.....	35.1	37.9	34.7	25.8	24.0
13 to 15.....	38.8	37.8	41.0	35.7	31.2
16.....	25.2	31.5	26.5	24.5	18.1
17 or more.....	27.9	32.5	33.0	38.4	25.8

Table G. Percent of Ever-Married Mothers Who Divorced After First Marriage by Birth History of Woman at First Marriage and Age at Survey Date: June 1990

	AGE AT SURVEY DATE (YEARS)				
Birth History	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59
With a premarital first birth.....	37.9	41.8	45.0	42.9	29.3
With a premaritally conceived/postmarital first birth.....	40.2	43.1	44.6	37.2	30.8
With a postmaritally conceived first birth.....	31.0	32.7	32.6	27.0	23.9

Table H. Percent of Ever-Married Mothers 40 to 49 Years Old Who Divorced After First Marriage by Birth History of Woman at First Marriage and Race and Hispanic Origin: June 1990

Birth History	RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN[1]			
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic Origin
With a premarital first birth or premaritally conceived/postmarital first birth.....	43.5	44.9	42.4	31.8
With a postmaritally conceived first birth.....	32.6	32.3	43.3	24.1

[1] Women of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table I. Percent of Women Who Remarried After Divorce From First Marriage by Age at Divorce and Race and Hispanic Origin of Women: June 1990

Race and Hispanic Origin	ALL AGES	AGE AT DIVORCE (YEARS) 20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39
All races	63.1	77.8	67.7	53.5	44.6
White	64.6	78.6	68.5	56.1	47.0
Black	51.4	70.6	60.9	38.3	29.5
Hispanic Origin[1]	51.8	68.6	58.3	40.6	24.2

[1] Women of Hispanic Origin may be of any race.

Table J. Percent of Women 40 to 49 and 50 to 59 Who Remarried After Divorce From First Marriage by Years Since Divorce: June 1990

	Age At Survey Date (Years)	
Years Since Divorce	40 to 49	50 to 59
3 or more.....	70.3	66.3
5 or more	72.9	68.1
10 or more.....	80.0	73.1
15 or more.....	85.5	77.0

Table K. Family Groups with Children Under 18, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder
of Householder or Reference Person: March 1990, 1980, and 1970
(Numbers in thousands)

Subject	1990		1980		1970		Average annual change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	1980-90	1980-70
ALL RACES								
Family groups with children	34,670	100.0	32,150	100.0	29,631	100.0	0.8	0.8
Two-parent family groups	24,921	71.9	25,231	78.5	25,823	87.1	-0.1	-0.2
One-parent family groups	9,749	28.1	6,920	21.5	3,808	12.9	3.4	6.0
Maintained by mother	8,398	24.2	6,230	19.4	3,415	11.5	3.0	6.0
Maintained by father	1,351	3.9	690	2.1	393	1.3	6.7	5.6
WHITE								
Family groups with children	28,294	100.0	27,294	100.0	26,115	100.0	0.4	0.4
Two-parent family groups	21,905	77.4	22,628	82.9	23,477	89.9	-0.3	-0.4
One-parent family groups	6,389	22.6	4,664	17.1	2,638	10.1	3.1	5.7
Maintained by mother	5,310	18.8	4,122	15.1	2,330	8.9	2.5	5.7
Maintained by father	1,079	3.8	542	2.0	307	1.2	6.9	5.7
BLACK								
Family groups with children	5,087	100.0	4,074	100.0	3,219	100.0	2.2	2.4
Two-parent family groups	2,006	39.4	1,961	48.1	2,071	64.3	0.2	-0.5
One-parent family groups	3,081	60.6	2,114	51.9	1,148	35.7	3.8	6.1
Maintained by mother	2,860	56.2	1,984	48.7	1,063	33.0	3.7	6.2
Maintained by father	221	4.3	129	3.2	85	2.6	5.4	4.2
HISPANIC (may be of any race)								
Family groups with children	3,429	100.0	2,194	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	4.5	(NA)
Two-parent family groups	2,289	66.8	1,626	74.1	(NA)	(NA)	3.4	(NA)
One-parent family groups	1,140	33.2	568	25.9	(NA)	(NA)	7.0	(NA)
Maintained by mother	1,003	29.3	526	24.0	(NA)	(NA)	6.5	(NA)
Maintained by father	138	4.0	42	1.9	(NA)	(NA)	(B)	(NA)

NA Not available.
B Base less than 75,000.
Note: Family groups comprise family households, related subfamilies and unrelated subfamilies.
file: TableE/07-15-92

Table L. Married-Couple Family Households With Children, by Type of Family: June 1990, 1985, and 1980
(Numbers in thousands)

	1990		1985		1980	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	25,313	100.0	23,868	100.0	24,091	100.0
1. Biological	19,253	76.1	18,470	77.4	19,037	79.0
2. Adoptive	345	1.4	303	1.3	429	1.8
3. Biological mother-stepfather	2,619	10.3	2,207	9.2	1,818	7.5
4. Biological father-stepmother	152	0.6	180	0.8	171	0.7
5. Joint biological-step	2,475	9.8	2,038	8.5	1,862	7.7
6. Joint biological-adoptive	324	1.3	223	0.9	429	1.8
7. Joint step-adoptive	8	0.0	15	0.1	12	0.0
8. Joint bio-step-adoptive	0	0.0	29	0.1	25	0.1
9. Unknown	137	0.5	403	1.7	309	1.3

TableB/04-24-92

Table M. Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years, by Race and Hispanic Origin: March 1990, 1980, and 1970
(Numbers in thousands. Excludes persons under 18 years old who were maintaining households or family groups.)

Living arrangements	Number			Percent distribution		
	1990	1980	1970	1990	1980	1970
All Races						
Children under 18 years	64,137	63,427	69,162	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Two parents	46,503	48,624	58,939	72.5	76.7	85.2
One parent	15,867	12,466	8,199	24.7	19.7	11.9
Mother only	13,874	11,406	7,452	21.6	18.0	10.8
Father only	1,993	1,060	748	3.1	1.7	1.1
Other relatives	1,422	1,949	1,547	2.2	3.1	2.2
Nonrelatives only	346	388	477	0.5	0.6	0.7
White						
Children under 18 years	51,390	52,242	58,790	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Two parents	40,593	43,200	52,624	79.0	82.7	89.5
One parent	9,870	7,901	5,109	19.2	15.1	8.7
Mother only	8,321	7,059	4,581	16.2	13.5	7.8
Father only	1,549	842	528	3.0	1.6	0.9
Other relatives	708	887	696	1.4	1.7	1.2
Nonrelatives only	220	254	362	0.4	0.5	0.6
Black						
Children under 18 years	10,018	9,375	9,422	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Two parents	3,781	3,956	5,508	37.7	42.2	58.5
One parent	5,485	4,297	2,996	54.8	45.8	31.8
Mother only	5,132	4,117	2,783	51.2	43.9	29.5
Father only	353	180	213	3.5	1.9	2.3
Other relatives	654	999	820	6.5	10.7	8.7
Nonrelatives only	98	123	97	1.0	1.3	1.0
Hispanic*						
Children under 18 years	7,174	5,459	4,006 **	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with --						
Two parents	4,789	4,116	3,111	66.8	75.4	77.7
One parent	2,154	1,152	(NA)	30.0	21.1	(NA)
Mother only	1,943	1,069	(NA)	27.1	19.6	(NA)
Father only	211	83	(NA)	2.9	1.5	(NA)
Other relatives	177	183	(NA)	2.5	3.4	(NA)
Nonrelatives only	54	8	(NA)	0.8	0.1	(NA)

NA Not available.
* Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.
** All persons under 18 years.
Source of 1970 Hispanic origin data: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(2)-1C, Persons of Spanish Origin.

Table N. Children Under 18 Years of Age Living With Biological, Step, and Adoptive Married-Couple Parents, by Race of Mother: June 1990, 1985, and 1980
(Numbers in thousands. Children of householders only)

	1990		1985		1980	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL RACES						
Total own children under 18 years	45,448	100.0	45,347	100.0	47,248	100.0
Biological mother and father	37,026	81.5	37,213	82.1	39,523	83.7
Biological mother-stepfather	6,643	14.6	6,049	13.3	5,355	11.3
Stepmother-biological father	608	1.3	740	1.6	727	1.5
Adoptive mother and father	974	2.1	866	1.9	1,350	2.9
Unknown mother or father	197	0.4	479	1.1	293	0.6
WHITE						
Total own children under 18 years	39,732	100.0	39,942	100.0	42,329	100.0
Biological mother and father	32,975	83.0	33,202	83.1	35,852	84.7
Biological mother-stepfather	5,258	13.2	4,918	12.3	4,362	10.3
Stepmother-biological father	549	1.4	676	1.7	664	1.6
Adoptive mother and father	815	2.1	754	1.9	1,209	2.9
Unknown mother or father	135	0.3	391	1.0	242	0.6
BLACK						
Total own children under 18 years	3,671	100.0	3,816	100.0	3,775	100.0
Biological mother and father	2,336	63.6	2,661	69.7	2,698	71.5
Biological mother-stepfather	1,149	31.3	952	24.9	877	23.2
Stepmother-biological father	38	1.0	50	1.3	46	1.2
Adoptive mother and father	97	2.6	76	2.0	119	3.2
Unknown mother or father	51	1.4	77	2.0	35	0.9
HISPANIC ORIGIN (may be of any race)						
Total own children under 18 years	4,568	100.0	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Biological mother and father	3,703	81.1	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Biological mother-stepfather	699	15.3	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Stepmother-biological father	38	0.8	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Adoptive mother and father	101	2.2	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Unknown mother or father	27	0.6	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

NA Not available.
TableN/04-24/92